
Thriving in a Changing World

2014 Higher Education Policy and Leadership Summit

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Association of Governing Boards of

Continuum of Board Effectiveness



How to Have a Mediocre Board

- Under-engaged/Over-engaged
 - Rarely have new members
 - Avoid discomfort
 - Have the president frame the agendas
 - Have the chair try to be president
 - Avoid focusing on the work of the board; focus only on the work of the institution
 - Have the board's executive committee make all the decisions
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How to Have a Mediocre Board

- Use meeting time the same way every time
- Have competing personal agendas
- Focus on the past
- Believe academic quality is a faculty issue
- Don't evaluate the president or provide constructive feedback
- Avoid risk
- Allow one board member to dominate, disrupt
- Get the president to police board misbehavior

What Effective Governing Boards Do

1. Ensure the mission is current (and aligned with public purposes)
 2. Select the president
 3. Work with and assess the president
 4. Approve the strategic plan and monitor progress
 5. Ensure fiscal integrity and support the college
 6. Ensure academic quality and integrity
 7. Protect and preserve academic freedom and institutional autonomy
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What Effective Governing Boards Do, cont.

- 8. Ensure policies are current and implemented
 - 9. Engage relevant constituencies appropriately
 - 10. Be transparent and ethical
 - 11. Assess own performance
 - 12. Focus on strategy
 - 13. Be creative and inquiring
 - 14. Apply risk assessment
 - 15. Build a collaborative partnership with CEO
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Toward High Performing Boards

- Engaged, informed
 - Forward/critical thinking
 - Intentional deliberation
 - Collaborative partners
 - Work aligned w/strategic priorities
 - Climate of trust and candor
 - Share information
 - Encourage multiple perspectives
 - Appreciate formal & informal roles
 - Commit to continuous assessment, education, and improvement
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Hallmarks of Highly Effective Boards*

1. Actively engaged in governance work
2. High level of trust and candor
3. Engage multiple perspectives
4. Concentrate on governance, not management
5. Focus on strategic issues that matter
6. Emphasize institutional perspective, not personal agendas

*AGB, *Effective Governing Boards*

Hallmarks of Highly Effective Boards* cont.

7. Give priority to student success
8. Provide philanthropic leadership
9. Act and speak as one
10. Uphold highest standards of ethics and quality
11. Engage community to learn and to advocate
12. Devote time to learning and team-building
13. Assess leadership and own practice for continuous improvement

*AGB, *Effective Governing Boards*

HIGH PERFORMING BOARDS

- Change Adept
 - Seize opportunity
 - Resolve crises
 - Sustain business model
- Fiduciary “Plus”
- Trust and candor
- Focus on dynamic & strategic issues
 - Thought Partners
 - Willingness to make tough decisions

HIGH PERFORMING BOARDS

- Welcome multiple perspectives
 - Climate of openness and positive social dynamic
 - Maintain confidentiality
 - Respect for institutional governance model
- A sense of reward for service (an enjoyable experience)
- Mission achievement
 - Governance with a goal of student success
- Monitoring progress
- Support for strong Presidential leadership

The Agenda as a Strategic Foundation

1. Is your education about higher education expanded at each meeting?
 2. Is there time at every meeting to discuss big ideas and the future?
 3. Is the board chair involved in formulating the agenda for each meeting?
 4. Does the chair-president-board member communication process work well?
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COMMITMENTS

- Commit to the Public Trust
 - Seek First to Understand
 - Attend and Engage
 - Confidential
 - No Conflict of Interest
 - Objective and Fair
 - No Personal Comments
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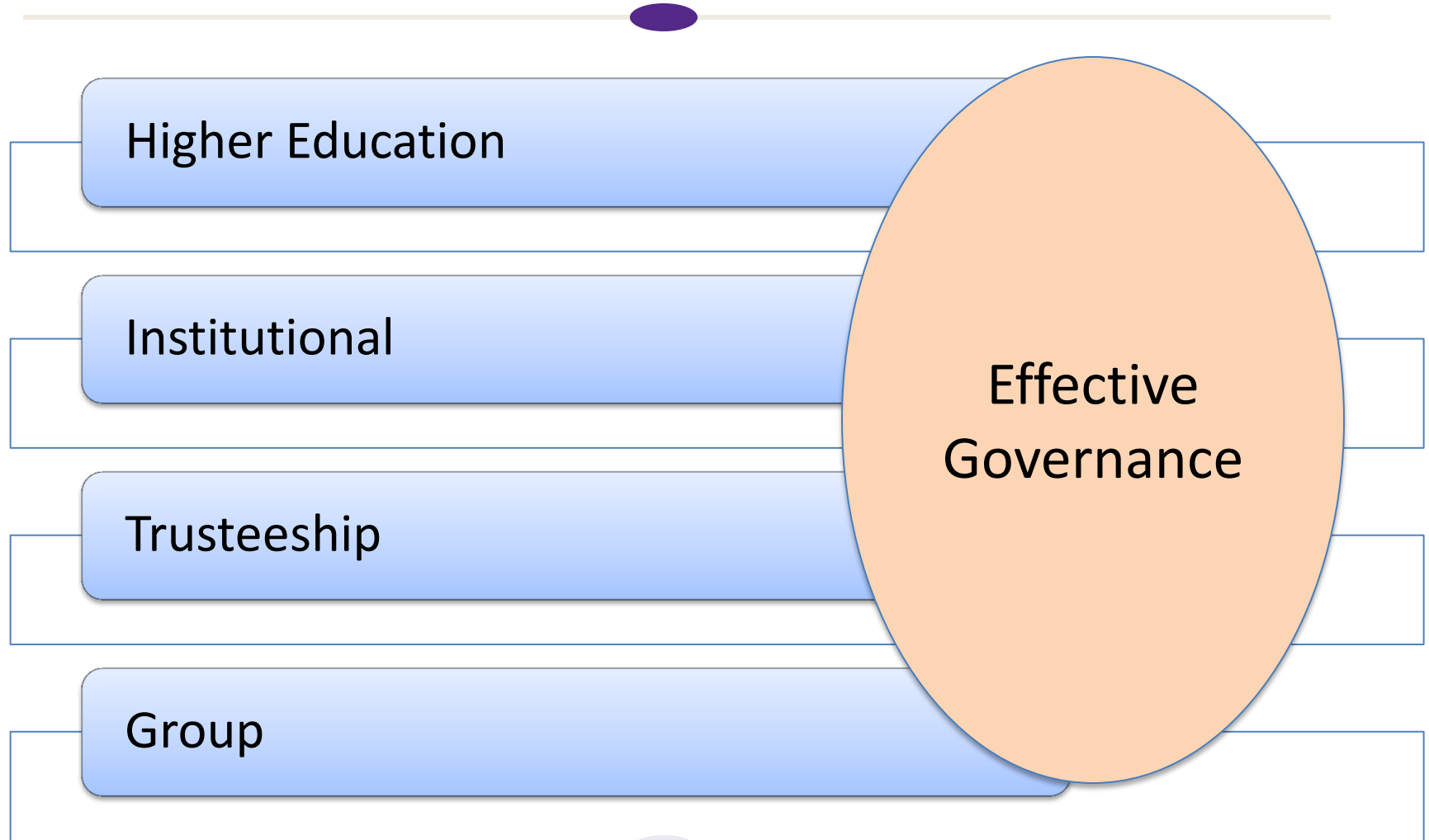
COMMITMENTS, cont.

- Respect Final Decision
- Chair and President as Spokespersons
- Build Strong Relationships
- Seek Views of Others and Accept Criticism
- Trust Other Board Members and Be Worthy of Their Trust

Healthy Board Culture

- Climate of trust and candor
- Collegiality, open communication, sense of community, and appropriate confidentiality
- Sense of common purpose
- Diverse perspectives appreciated
- Integrates new members effectively
- Nourishes its own leadership
- Works as team for institution, not personal agendas
- Engages all members and uses their diverse talents
- Communicates with one voice to constituents

Four Domains of Understanding



Strategic Board Responsibilities

**GOVERNANCE
&
CONSTITUENT
RELATIONS**

**MISSION,
VISION**

PLANNING

**THE
PRESIDENT**

**FISCAL
INTEGRITY**

**EDUCATIONAL
QUALITY**

Strategic/Fiduciary Governance Risk

- Limited awareness of fiduciary responsibilities
- Confusing management and governance
- Failure to establish objectives/priorities
- Lack of orientation and ongoing board development
- Limited awareness of higher education trends and issues

Governance or Management

Communicate!

- Is it big?
- Is it about the future?
- Is it core to the mission?
- Is a high-level policy decision needed to resolve a situation?
- Is a red flag flying?
- Is a watchdog watching?
- Does the CEO want and need the board's support?

Barry Bader, "Distinguishing Governance from Management," Great Boards, Fall 2008

Sample Strategic Topics

- Vision
- Strategy
- Values
- Resources
- Future
- Talent
- Reputation
- Mission
- Productivity
- Results
- Long term
- Business plan
- Customer wants/needs
- Evidence
- Competition
- Quality
- Efficiency
- Brand, positioning

Sample Strategic Questions

- What would be the 5-10 year impact?
- How does this advance our strategy?
- What are the key trends, risks, opportunities...?
- What are the critical success factors for this proposal?
- President Smith, is there anything on your mind that we can help you think through?



Thank You